

Information Item

California Postsecondary Education Commission

Status of Improving Teacher Quality Grant Program

Staff will present a status report on its most recently completed grant competition in which the Commission awarded over \$14 million for various teacher professional development activities.

Presenter: Linda Barton White.



Status of Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program – Title II, Part A, No Child Left Behind Act, 2001

Background

Since 1985, the Commission has received approximately \$60 million in federal funds to improve the teaching workforce in California and has awarded 173 grants to a variety of educational entities, including K-12 school districts, institutions of higher education, informal science centers, and non-profit educational organizations.

Congress originally authorized the program in 1984 under Title II of the Education for Economic Security (EESA) Act (Public Law 98-377) to improve instruction in elementary and secondary mathematics, science, and foreign languages. In 1989, under the reauthorized federal Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (ESEA), the emphasis on professional development was continued and Congress authorized the program as the Dwight D. Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education State Grant Program (Public Law 100-297). The Eisenhower Program focused only on mathematics and science instruction. In 1994, the Eisenhower Program was continued under the reauthorized ESEA, Improving America's School Act (Public Law 103-382), and was expanded beyond mathematics and science to include reading, arts, civics and government, economics, English, foreign languages, geography, and history.

In the most recent reauthorization of the federal ESEA, Congress passed House Bill 1, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (Public Law 107-110). Title II, Part A, of NCLB contains provisions for states to access federal resources via a formula and grant program to improve the academic content knowledge of teachers, principals, and other school based personnel.

Under Title II, the Commission is authorized to conduct a competition to award grants to institutions of higher education in partnership with local educational agencies (LEA). In addition, partnerships can include non-profit organizations, business and industry, and community-based organizations.

The first grant competition held under the reauthorized program began in February 2003.

Overall program goals, federal mandates, and 2003 funding initiatives

Members of the Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) State level Advisory Committee (see Exhibit A) played a significant role in the development of the California ITQ grant program funding priorities for the 2003 request for proposals.

After a meeting in January 2003 of a newly-organized Advisory Committee, a subsequent meeting was held with the Committee and Commission staff to determine program priorities and develop specific language for a Request for Proposals (RFP). The final RFP was prepared by Commission staff.

Funding Initiative 1: Open

Perceived as a “broad” category, this initiative sought the best ideas from California’s professional development providers in all of the subject areas authorized by the federal law. The Commission sought projects that integrated mathematics and science, as well as other subjects, including foreign languages, arts, civics and government, history, economics, English, and reading.

Funding Initiative 2: Technology

Recognizing the important use of technology in solving pressing educational problems, prospective projects were sought that would enrich the learning environment through utilizing and developing technology as a tool to improve subject matter competency for K-12 teachers and students. The Commission sought partnership models to increase productivity and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of subject matter content.

Funding Initiative 3: Secondary School Content

Faced with the growing problem in California of secondary school (grades 7-12) instruction in certain subjects, particularly mathematics and science, being taught by persons without credentials in those fields, this Initiative 3 sought to work more directly with subject matter departments within a school. Applicants were required to demonstrate how their project would involve a majority of members from a large department (or department across districts) that facilitate ways to increase departmental collaboration and employ standards-based content. Projects were encouraged to include teachers from feeder schools (grades 5-6).

Funding Initiative 4: Pipeline to Professional Certification in Mathematics and Science—Teacher Recruitment, Preparation and Retention

Recognizing the need to recruit and train more teachers with strong mathematics and science backgrounds, Initiative 4 sought to increase the number of California teachers certified to teach in these fields. In addition, projects were sought under this Initiative which supported alternative certification and strong induction (new teacher support) efforts.

ITQ 2003 process The RFP highlighted the goals for the projects, to include:

- ♦ The potential to have a lasting and positive impact on classroom practices and student performance and be sufficiently sustained, intensive, and of high quality.
- ♦ A connection with challenging national and state subject-matter content standards.
- ♦ Integration into the systemic reform efforts of states, school districts and individual schools.
- ♦ A reflection on current research on diverse teaching and learning methods and styles.
- ♦ The inclusion of strong academic content and contemporary pedagogical elements.
- ♦ Activities and strategies for serving teachers and students from groups identified as historically underrepresented in particular subject areas, such as science and mathematics. In addition, the incorporation of activities to address the needs of English Language Learners (ELL).
- ♦ Promote effective teaching and learning that takes place in formal and informal settings.
- ♦ Recognition of essential role of prospective and current K-12 personnel in planning and implementing the professional development activity.

The Commission also encouraged prospective applicants to consider in their project design the “academy model” of preparation that involves prospective and current teachers part of the day in their own professional development with the remainder of the day in the application of this knowledge with students in the classroom setting. Principals, paraprofessionals, and parents may also be served under the ITQ projects.

The RFP outlined the federal requirements under NCLB to be eligible to receive an ITQ grant. It noted that each funded project:

- ♦ Must serve high need local educational agency (LEA) defined as one that serves at least 10,000 children from families with incomes below the poverty line OR schools in which 20 percent of the children are from families below the poverty line. A high need LEA is also one in which a high percentage of teachers are teaching subjects outside of their certification level or in which there is a high percentage of teachers on emergency, provisional, or temporary credentials.
- ♦ Provide evidence that the activities were developed and implemented under a joint agreement and partnership which must include, at a

minimum, one high need local education agency, and a department/school of education, and a department/school of arts of sciences of an institution of higher education. Charter schools, non-profit educational organizations and/or other schools and institutions of higher education could be partners.

- ♦ Provide evidence that the activities proposed are based upon proved scientifically based research on effective practices in teacher training and re-training.

**ITQ 2003
competition
proposal
solicitation and
grant award
process**

- ♦ *March 2003* *Notice to the Field*

Approximately 5,000 “Notice of Intent to Request Proposals” were mailed in March 2003 to alert the field of the competition. Notices were sent to every school, district, county office of education and accredited institutions of higher education.

- ♦ *April* *Request for Proposals (RFP)*

Request for Proposals were mailed to the LEAs and IHEs listed above under the Notice to the Field.

- ♦ *May through June 2003* *Technical Assistance Workshops*

The Commission held five workshops throughout California in Oakland (May 22), Fresno, (May 27), Los Angeles (May 28), San Diego (May 29) and Redding (June 2).

- ♦ *June* *Letter of Intent to Submit A Proposal*

The Commission anticipated a larger number of applications than in previous years. Because of the scope of the Commission’s funding initiatives and the significant budget cuts to state-funded professional development programs, prospective applicants were required to notify the Commission in writing (via form) of their intent to submit a proposal. The Letter of Intent identified the Funding Initiative, Subject(s), and Grade Level. One-hundred and fifty-six (156) letters were received.

- July* *Deadline to submit Letter of Intent*

Only those institutions submitting a letter of intent were provided security access to the application form and general instructions for the narrative and budget sections of the proposal.

- June, July, and August* *Establishment of Proposal Review Panel and Training Workshop*

In June, the Commission sent out a general announcement to secure the services of subject matter specialists to evaluate proposals. Prospective readers were required to complete an interest survey (on-line) and submit

a resume/vitae. In early August, the Commission entered into contract with thirty (30) proposal readers.

On August 21 through 23, the selected readers attended a workshop to review the Commission's review process, and to receive training on evaluating the proposals. Among the Panel were individuals who had previously evaluated proposals for the Commission.

August 25

Proposal Deadline

One-hundred and sixteen (116) applications/proposals were received by the August 25 deadline.

August and September

Phase I Proposal Review Processes

In light of the large number of proposals received, the Commission staff initiated a two-phase review process in an effort to pre-assess the quality of each proposal in terms of program design and/or compliance to federal mandates. For the Phase I review process, the Commission contracted only with those reviewers (see Exhibit B) with prior experience in evaluating proposals for the Commission. In addition, several Commission staff members, who had also worked in the program and/or served as reviewers in previous competitions, participated in the Phase I process. As a result of the Phase I process, ten (10) proposals were not forwarded for review.

Phase II

The Phase II Proposal Review Panel (see Exhibit C) was divided into five groups to achieve as divergent a group of readers as possible based upon the subjects and activities for the proposals.

Prior to meeting for the proposal ranking session in Sacramento on September 19 and 20, each panelist prepared written comments on the proposals. Each proposal was discussed in the individual group meetings and later reported to the entire Panel for additional discussion. The Panel then recommended 26 of the 116 proposals to be extended an invitation for an interview with Commissions staff and members of the Panel.

September through October Interviews

(All prospective applicants were provided dates for the interviews in the Notice to the Field and Request for Proposals sent to them in March and April 2003.)

In the letter of invitation for an interview, staff outlined any concerns and/or issues raised by the Panel from the discussion of the proposal on September 19 and 20. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

At the conclusion of the interview, the project was discussed with the panel to ascertain a recommendation as to whether or not the project would be recommended to receive a grant.

Further Consideration

Thirteen (13) of the 26 projects were recommended for funding to the Executive Director. Staff was requested to re-evaluate the 26 proposals invited to an interview. Of the 26 reviewed, two of were granted a second interview. At the end of this review process and subsequent interviews, the Executive Director made the decision to approve the 13 projects recommended by the Panel and an additional four (4). (See Exhibit D)

Commission Portfolio, Previously and Newly-Funded Projects

In addition to the seventeen ITQ projects, there were thirty-two (32) projects initially funded under the previous Eisenhower State Grant Program that are slated to end by December 2004. A monograph to highlight the findings for these projects will be provided to the Commission early next year.

The 17 proposed new ITQ projects represent a funding commitment of \$4,616,863 for their first year of operation. The 32 projects initially funded under the Eisenhower Program that are scheduled to end later this year, total \$7,716,659. Funding commitments to the 49 projects total \$12,333,522 for activities between October 1, 2003 through December 31, 2004.

With respect to future funding for the program, the federal fiscal year (FY) 2003 allocation of \$8.0 million was available in July 2003 and the federal FY 2004 will be available to the Commission this coming July. Officials from the United States Department of Education have advised the field that the Bush Administration has proposed the same level of funding for federal FY 2005.



CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program

Proposal Review Panel De-briefing Meeting

December 13-14, 2003

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

1. PROPOSAL/APPLICATION DESIGN

- ♦ Redesign the proposal in the form of an “application”, moving away from the “report/scholarly paper”.
- ♦ Pose specific questions with space limitations for response.
- ♦ Demerit to applicants who fail to meet the format specifications—margins, spacing, and font size.
- ♦ Pre-screening was helpful.
- ♦ In light of the fact that Year One pre-screening was implemented after application review process was noticed to prospective applicants, screening was more “liberal.” If noticed to the field, more stringent pre-screening process can be used.
- ♦ Focus on needs of English Language Learners. Experts in the field should be consulted to assist providing expectations for this domain in carrying-out professional development activities.
- ♦ Provide list or link to names of schools that meet federal criteria for services under this program;

2. READER TRAINING

- ♦ Ranking leader structure good; make certain that it is a strong individual with experience with the program.
- ♦ Training session was useful and helpful
- ♦ Instruments used for training should be more closely aligned to the criteria published RFP.

3. PROPOSAL READING AND EVALUATION PROCESS

- ♦ More time was needed for the reading process.
- ♦ Pro-con process a valuable tool and enhanced the quality of the discussion around each proposal.
- ♦ Each panel needs to meet prior to final rating and ranking session to determine its “process” model.
- ♦ Importance of provided “detailed” summary comments must be reinforced to panel.
- ♦ Leader of panel has to “set parameters” as well. Staff should review process with panel leaders in advance of proposal ranking session to assist in development of panel process model, e.g., take the “good ones” and get them out of the way; set a time-frame for each discussion; a norm/standard for “note-taking”, etc.
- ♦ Equipment should be provided to enhance note-taking during the panel’s discussion.
- ♦ Develop a form to “summarize” all aspects of the proposal/application. (Use form developed by reader Garcia as the template.)
- ♦ A form is needed to provide panel an instrument to comment on process.

4. APPLICANT INTERVIEW PROCESS

- ♦ Panels should meet day/evening before to review overall panel comments, responses to concerns raised by the Panel and provided to the Commission in advance of the interview, and protocol for the interview.
- ♦ Time “needs” should be re-evaluated for all aspects of the interview process.

5. OUTREACH TO DIFFERENT “PLAYERS”

- ♦ Conduct workshops in targeted communities with emphasis on school-based personnel attending.
- ♦ Target different conferences – professional K-12 administrative and teacher organization, etc.
- ♦ Provide RFP notice to CTA Representative at each school in state.
- ♦ Targeted mailing to community-based organizations.

6. OTHER COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

- ♦ Logistics and accommodations were very good and created an ambiance that made it comfortable for panel members to “get better acquainted”.
 - ♦ The Friday-Saturday combination worked well, especially for classroom teachers and postsecondary faculty.
 - ♦ CPEC has provided a “welcome” environment for classroom teachers.
 - ♦ CPEC should reassess remuneration, including the interview sessions which were also very time-consuming.
 - ♦ BUILD IN MORE TIME FOR EVERY ASPECT OF THE COMPETITION
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